

## The Manage-A-Bull Podcast: How to 'find your family' in the UB Full-Time MBA program?

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Vish Gopalakrishnan:

Hi, I'm Vish Gopalakrishnan. This is Manage-A-Bull Podcast, where we have in-depth conversations with students, faculty, staff, and alumni to give you a comprehensive picture into the life at University at Buffalo's School of Management. In today's episode, we speak with Anna Zuefle, a recent graduate of the UB full-time MBA program, from Buffalo, New York. In our conversation, we talk about her unique life experiences and how they informed and influenced her time in the UB MBA program. Anna, welcome to the show.

Anna Zuefle:

Hey, Vish. Thanks for having me.

Vish Gopalakrishnan:

As a Buffalo native, you would've experienced your fair share of winter weather and storms. Any tips for those of us from the tropics on to handle the cold?

Anna Zuefle:

Yeah, definitely. I'd say, first off, lots of hot coffee. I would say make sure you stock up on scarves, gloves, knit hats, and boots. You'll need all of them, especially for the freezing cold Buffalo Bills games that you have to go to.

Vish Gopalakrishnan:

Right. One of the tips that I also heard about the same thing was don't buy your winter clothing elsewhere. Buy it here because Buffalo winters are definitely not your common winters.

Anna Zuefle:

100%.

Vish Gopalakrishnan:

It always helps to go to Burlington Coat Factory or a local location and buy whatever you need. Don't buy it where you are from because it's not going to be useful.

Anna Zuefle:

I would say yes, and from Canada, you can get some pretty good stuff. But normally, if you get a Canadian goose jacket, it might be a little bit more expensive.

Vish Gopalakrishnan:

Although you grew up in Buffalo, you were actually born somewhere much warmer. Tell us a little bit about that.

Anna Zuefle:

Yes. I was born in Bogotá, Columbia, in South America. I was adopted at two months old by my amazing parents who then brought me to Buffalo, New York. Buffalo has been my home ever since.

Vish Gopalakrishnan:

What are some of your favorite things about growing up in Buffalo?

Anna Zuefle:

I think my favorite thing about growing up in Buffalo is simply that my family is tied to the city. For that reason, Buffalo will always have a special place in my heart. Also, it's just always felt like a true community here. I feel like it's not uncommon to meet someone new in Buffalo, whether it be at a sporting event or a networking event, and they know somebody that you know. Also, you can't go wrong with the buffalo wings, which I can make a pretty good chicken wing dip. It's a secret recipe that my mom taught me.

Vish Gopalakrishnan:

Right. I think a lot of families have their own version of the famous buffalo wings. I didn't actually know that Buffalo Wild Wings or buffalo sauce even was named after the city.

Anna Zuefle:

Yes. Yeah. Definitely, it was. When did you find that out?

Vish Gopalakrishnan:

Much, much later, to my embarrassment. I should have known this before coming here, but no, I didn't. It was someone, one of my friends here, who pointed that out. I was like, "Well, okay. You know what? That actually makes sense that the sauce is named after the city." There are a couple of locations here. Let me ask you that. I know this is a big heated debate with Buffalonians, but what's your favorite place to have a wing?

Anna Zuefle:

100%, I have to say Duff's because, well, number one, their wings are saucier. But also, number two, my parents had their first date at Duff's, so it's a close family tie to the place.

Vish Gopalakrishnan:

Right. Here's another controversial question. Blue cheese or ranch?

Anna Zuefle:

No question. Blue cheese. If you answer otherwise, you're wrong.

Vish Gopalakrishnan:

I think that's the true test of being a Buffalonian. I think the people who are from here definitely say that it's blue cheese over ranch, although people from outside of Buffalo, because they're just used to ranch, that's the condiment that they use. That's how you tell the difference between someone who's true Buffalo and not true Buffalo. Okay. Obviously, growing up in Buffalo, there's no escaping the gravitational pole of UB. The university has such a large presence in the city. When was the first time you started considering UB as a potential choice for higher education?

Anna Zuefle:

Yeah. I began considering UB when I was about to graduate from Duquesne University in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. At the time, I was in my final semester of my senior year while also working at the

Pittsburgh Penguins at the time in their partnership marketing department. When everything was completely shut down because of the pandemic, I had to move back to Buffalo. As I was finishing out my bachelor's degree, I found out my first full-time job offer, which was actually in Buffalo, that I secured in my senior year, had been rescinded due to a hiring freeze on the company's end. I was very shaken about it, but I didn't want to let it hold me back from continuing my momentum forward. So I decided to pivot and go right for my MBA, which was a degree I always knew I wanted. It was just a matter of when. UB was the perfect fit for me because it allowed me to be close to my family for the past two years. I wouldn't have wanted it any other way. Not only this, but I also felt like I also grew a family over these past two years with the people I met within the UB MBA program. I knew it was a highly ranked program and one that would challenge me in ways that I hadn't been before, especially the way it allowed me to engage in a team setting very frequently.

Vish Gopalakrishnan:

It seems like you are a people-centric person. I think that's a great quality to have in someone who's in marketing. It's important to cultivate close bonds with those around you. Can you tell us more about how the UB culture was a good fit for you?

Anna Zuefle:

Yeah. The UB culture was a great fit for me. I knew this as I started getting more involved with the university. I found that the more I surrounded myself by people with similar values as mine, I felt myself growing personally and professionally. For example, the LeaderCORE program allowed me to be able to work with people who also wanted to capitalize on their leadership skills. I also was able to work on my marketing skills when I was involved with the entrepreneurship clinic at UB, where I would conduct SEO audits, local company websites, which allowed me to work with even more people in the Buffalo area. Then, being a fellow in the SIF program exposed me to the nonprofit world, and also to people of all different backgrounds, which is where I learned the value of working on an interdisciplinary team.

Vish Gopalakrishnan:

You mentioned LeaderCORE. It's not surprising how many of the people that I talked to on this podcast actually mentioned LeaderCORE as one of the key reasons why they selected UB in the first place, and the experience that they've had in it. You recently graduated with your certificate in LeaderCORE.

Correct?

Anna Zuefle:

Yes.

Vish Gopalakrishnan:

Tell us a little bit more about that journey.

Anna Zuefle:

It was a very reflective journey and one that I didn't know I needed from the get-go. I just got involved with it not knowing where it was going to take me. But, after having a mentor of my own, and then going through all the growth periods of the journey itself, through the process of journaling and being

mentored and just the opportunities that the LeaderCORE program had, it allowed me to really capitalize on my leadership skills, to the point where, towards the end of the program, I began to get involved with the LEAP program, which is where I became a mentor for two mentees, one located in Jamaica and one located in Latvia. It's really been just as valuable an experience being a mentor myself.

Vish Gopalakrishnan:

Great. Previously, you also mentioned values and how important it was to find a place that matched a lot of the values that you have. Can you tell us a little bit more about how you were able to find people at UB who had similar values to you?

Anna Zuefle:

Yeah. UB allowed me to fully realize my value for people and the passion that I have for people. When I became a member of the UB MBA consulting group, I was initially a general member, but I wanted to do more to help grow the group. This is when I became the director of marketing and recruitment. In this role, I was given the freedom to use my creativity and people skills to cultivate a strong social media presence, particularly with LinkedIn. Let me tell you, the posts with the most engagement were the ones that I would spotlight one of our individual members and discuss the skills that they bring to the UB MBA consulting group.

The group is a selective group of MBA students. Part of the reason it's selective and exclusive is because the individuals brought into the group bring value to it simply by being themselves and bringing the skills that they have to the table. I have said this statement to our members, which is that I firmly believe the simple fact that your organization or company is only as good as the people that lie within it, so we need to take care of our people.

Vish Gopalakrishnan:

Right. So much of management is about people. It's important to find a program that provides us the opportunities to hone our people management skills. Now, you mentioned the consulting club, which is a great example. LeaderCORE is obviously another great example. You also mentioned about becoming a mentor. Tell me a little bit more about how is the experience of actually being a mentor for other students, especially international students?

Anna Zuefle:

Definitely. I think, like I said before, I have learned just as much if not more being a mentor myself. It is incredible being on the other end, seeing the growth that my mentees have gone through themselves. Sandrine and Jacobs were my mentees. Although they were in different countries and had different growth paths as individuals, they both each grew in their own ways, which allowed me to really understand the value of learning how to become a great leader, which, in turn, will hopefully help me become a good manager when it comes time for graduation and going into the workforce.

Vish Gopalakrishnan:

Right. Speaking from the perspective of an international student, sometimes it can be very difficult being so far away from your family. Therefore, it's important to take efforts to cultivate your own family here at UB. What advice would you have for students in general, but also international students on cultivating your own family at UB?

Anna Zuefle:

My best advice would be to get involved as much as you possibly can. Find where your passions are, and see where that aligns within the program. For me, my passions lied with communicating, networking, and consulting. That's why the UB MBA consulting group came into play for me, as well as LeaderCORE with the leadership skills. Within those, you'll find people that share similar values and passions. That's where you'll cultivate very strong bonds with people that can take you forever in other aspects. But once you have those bonds, it carries with you for the rest of your life.

Vish Gopalakrishnan:

Right. Another aspect of the UB MBA program that's a little unique to the program is the emphasis that's put on teamwork. From the very beginning of the program, you're put in a team of five to six students. You work with them on multiple projects and deliverables. That's just the beginning of it. After that, the second semester, you have multiple teams and then, obviously, more teams after that. Can you tell us a little bit more about your experience of working with multiple teams? What are some of the lessons that you learned in the process?

Anna Zuefle:

Oh, my gosh. It was a shock factor at first, I will admit, because I never really worked so much in a team setting before the MBA program. When I was on my first team, I really did not know what I was doing, to be honest. It was a steep learning curve. However, over time, you just learn how to work with others with different backgrounds. You learn how to communicate with different people, and how people are receptive to different types of communication, and how they would like to be spoken to, and how well they work. You learn where their skills lie. I think this is the elements that you need to take with you as a good manager, is understanding where people's strengths lie, and then, going forward, being able to delegate as a leader and communicate well with others in order to create a strong team bond, to cultivate strong results in the end for the whole team. I think over time I've gotten much, much better working in teams. The growth journey never ends, but I've definitely grown stronger as a leader within these past two years on a team setting.

Vish Gopalakrishnan:

Right. What would be your one advice on building a strong team culture? How does one go about connecting with team members, especially those from diverse backgrounds?



Anna Zuefle:

This is going to be an interesting piece of advice, but I would say any opportunity you can get to build the relationship outside of school is very important. Whether that be going out to a restaurant as a team and just relaxing and talking about each other and getting to know each other, although that part doesn't seem crucial, it is one thing that has really enabled me to develop my bonds within my teams.

Vish Gopalakrishnan:

Right. I have to ask this. Four semesters in the MBA program. What were some of your favorite classes and professors, and why?

Anna Zuefle:

My top two favorite classes were, one, negotiations, and two, data modeling. These are both electives. Funny thing. But I think the class that I learned the absolute most was data modeling. I know for a fact that's going to take me into my career. I'll be using it for the rest of my life. So, for that fact, those two classes. I would say my favorite professor is probably my data modeling professor as well, Diana, because she told us on the very first day, and I'll never forget this, she said, "I want you guys to learn the material. I want you to understand that your growth isn't all about just your grade. Matter of fact, the most growth you get is your learning experience, so it doesn't matter the grade at the end of the day. It matters how much you're really getting out of this course and how much you're learning." From that day forward, I've just put so much efforts into the course. I really have gotten a lot out of it.

Vish Gopalakrishnan:

Absolutely. I think data modeling is famous. I don't know if it's famous or infamous for being one of the harder electives to take in the program. But it is also one that pretty much every student who takes it swears by it. Diana is an incredible professor. I think a couple of other students have also mentioned just how wonderful the learning experience was. This is a professor who goes above and beyond. I have a few friends taking it this semester, and the report card has been she's incredible. She'll spend an hour with you at 9:00 p.m. while having dinner to just walk you through an assignment to make sure that you actually understand it. That's something that's truly inspiring about UB, just the dedication of the professors in terms of making sure that we actually learn the materials. It's been an incredible four semesters. Lots of experiences. Now that you're graduated, what's next for you?

Anna Zuefle:

The UB MBA program has been a very incredible experience. I must reiterate that. It's one I'll never forget. Next up for me is moving to New York City this summer to begin working full-time for McKinsey & Company.

Vish Gopalakrishnan:

Wow. That is an incredible opportunity. Can you tell us a little bit more about the role?

Anna Zuefle:

Yeah. I am considered a business insights fellow, so I will be rotating through different departments of McKinsey trying to figure out where my strengths lie. At the end of two years, whatever rotation I see

that I have the most interest in, I will decide on that and choose where I want to go forward with the company.

Vish Gopalakrishnan:

Quick followup question before we come to the end of the interview. What were some of the resources at UB that helped you find this opportunity?

Anna Zuefle:

Yeah. It's actually funny you asked that. I actually found it through Handshake. A recruiter reached out to me through UB Handshake, and that was history.

Vish Gopalakrishnan:

Handshake, for people who don't know, is one of the career resources that are provided. This is where recruiters and companies come and post internships, jobs, et cetera. UB students can utilize that. There's also something called BizLink, which a lot of students utilize also. Anna, thank you so much for taking the time to speak with us today and sharing your experiences. I'm sure it's going to be a great learning opportunity for a lot of our listeners who are thinking about an MBA or have already applied, but don't really know where to begin their journey. If our listeners want to follow your journey, where can they find you?

Anna Zuefle:

Yeah. Thanks again so much for having me. It's been a great time interviewing with you. You can find me on LinkedIn or Instagram. Both are just my first and last name. I'm happy to connect and speak with anyone if they have any questions about my UB MBA experience.

Vish Gopalakrishnan:

Anna, thank you so much. Thank you for listening to Manage-A-Bull Podcast, produced by the Office of Strategic Marketing and Enrollment Management, University at Buffalo. For more information on our programs and offerings, visit [management.buffalo.edu](http://management.buffalo.edu). If you would like to be featured on the podcast or you would like to share comments and suggestions, please write to us at [gopalak2@buffalo.edu](mailto:gopalak2@buffalo.edu). That's G-O-P-A-L-A-K, two, at buffalo.edu. Thank you. We will see you in the next one.